Tehetségek a tudomány horizontján.

Válogatás a Szegedi Tudományegyetem
Bölcsészettudományi Kara
hallgatóinak tudományos munkáiból

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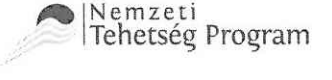

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Introduction

In this paper I will examine the novel entitled *The Body Artist*, written by Don DeLillo, one of the most acknowledged American, postmodern prose writers. In the course of my examination I will create my interpretation of the novel applying the terms of corporeal narratology, a post-deconstructionist narratological practice first popularized by Daniel Punday in his influential study *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology* (2003).

I believe that approaching the DeLillo canon with the help of this relatively recent field of academic knowledge will offer a prosperous perspective on his work. DeLillo is known as a writer who, while using a wide range of topics, tends to return to and revise certain ones in several of his novels. Regarding my argumentation the most remarkable of these will be that of language.

The way I see it, examination of the inexpressible, the unnarratable, which DeLillo attempts to thematize in his texts along with language, is closely tied to the mysterious nature that critics repeatedly point out (but rarely attempt to explain) concerning his prose. I will investigate this "inaccessible" quality focusing on the textual peculiarities caused by the moments when the inexpressible seems to enter the text. The tendency of experimenting with writing the inexpressible is accompanied by a growing interest in human embodiment and the functions of the body, which also have to originate from DeLillo's well-known fascination with language. This is what makes a relatively fresh interpretation—provided by the theory of corporeal narratology—of DeLillo's works possible. I aim at finding answers to the following questions: How could *The Body Artist*'s protagonist's character be fit into the theory of corporeal narratology? What makes the DeLillo texts "inaccessible"?

Where the unnarratable, for instance a trauma, is about to be (re)narrated in DeLillo texts, language collapses or misfires, and materiality, often in the form of human corporeality appears and takes over the role of signifiers. Getting beyond language, which undeniably has a material dimension, seems to be a complex mission in DeLillo's oeuvre, and *The Body Artist* is the novel where this concern is the most emphasized.

I will (re)interpret the characters and the narrator of the novel with the help of Daniel Punday's ideas about characterization, focusing on character bodies and their bodily perceptions. I will define the map of relationships between the character(s) of the novel, and contrast them to Punday's ideas of literary characters. Eventually, inviting Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of the "flair" of Hitchcock films, I will examine the way the textual body of the novel affects the reader. My hypothesis will be that the so called "inaccessible" quality of DeLillo novels is a result of his writing style that aims at incorporating what is beyond language, which we see as unexpectedly presented corporeality that surfaces at points where language reaches its limits, leaving "holes" or "gaps" in the texts.

1. The Don DeLillo Reception

In the following section I plan to provide a brief outline of the reception of Don DeLillo's works. I will chiefly focus on the criticism concerning the themes of language in his novels, as well as the "inaccessible" nature of his texts.

Don DeLillo's novels are known to encompass numerous themes, fields of studies, and tones of voice and he likes to experiment with genres and themes (Dewey 2006, 3; Cowart 2008, 5). Among his regular topics are conspiracies, terrorism, possibilities and limits of language, world politics, the role of artists, identity crises, catastrophes, and America itself—and DeLillo shows no difficulty combining them.

Enikő Bollobás describes the author as a canonized, white, male writer, an important figure of American postmodernism, noting that his works bear numerous postmodern features such as self-reflexivity and an intellectual tone (Bollobás 2006, 657). He can be called an exemplary postmodern novelist, and simultaneously he resists postmodern thought and practices (Cowart 2002, 12). He carries an "uncanny resistance to popularity" (Bloom 2003, 89-90) and a similar resistance to clear categories of criticism. He is a descendant of Italian immigrants yet his novels lack an ethnic consciousness (Aaron 1991, 67). His works have been harshly criticized for political content yet DeLillo claims to have no "political theory or doctrine" (DeCurtis 1991, 65) and ultimately his works are not interested in politics *per se* (Cowart 2008, 154).

Besides the few controversial features I have just mentioned his works are difficult to classify because of his curious writing techniques. According to Daniel Aaron the writer, in terms of style, is a "withholder" and a "mystifier," and his texts are full of "unexplained phenomena" (Aaron 1991, 68), Joseph Dewey simply calls his texts "inaccessible" (Dewey 2006, 1, 3). On the other hand, DeLillo's writing has also been judged as too "talky," "boring," and "overwritten" (Aaron 1991, 75). Fragmented and heterogeneous as his textures may be, it is also important to note that there are numerous themes in DeLillo's novels that he tends to revisit, and some of them go through remarkable evolutions in the oeuvre. Joseph Dewey's *Beyond Grief and Nothing: A Reading of Don DeLillo*, considering the visions of the apocalypse in the DeLillo canon, or David Cowart's *Don DeLillo: The Physics of Language*, concerning the topic of language both attempt to analyze DeLillo's entire body of work. Tom LeClair even goes as far as claiming that DeLillo's whole literary career has to be understood as a metanovel, as if all the prose he has produced created a single enormous novel (Donovan 2005, 27).

The theme in DeLillo criticism which appears the most relevant regarding my thesis is that of language. DeLillo is deeply preoccupied with language, in fact he "demonstrates a seemingly inexhaustible ability to conjure fresh questions about language" (Duvall, 2008, 155). His vocabulary is rich and sophisticated and he is notably fascinated by "euphemisms and jargon" (DeCurtis 1991, 61) to the extent where some even find it harmful regarding his stories (Bloom 2003, 107-8). On the other hand, as Cowart examines it, from time to time language appears as the very subject of DeLillo texts. The inquiry into the nature of language, accompanied by a quest for what is beyond language becomes more and more emphasized in his subsequent works, for instance in *The Names* (1982), or in *The Body Artist* (2001). *The Names*, which is often recognized as a turning point, or a new beginning in the oeuvre (Donovan 2005, 51; Cowart 2008, 160), has key deconstructionist terms at its core such as inscription, signifying, referentiality, or meaning.

All in all, as it is already apparent, what interests me most in DeLillo's works are their uncanny, mysterious nature at a textual level, as well as their preoccupation with language, and I hold it as a theory that these two features are strongly connected. I have reached this conclusion with the methods of corporeal narratology, which is capable of interpreting the nature as well as the structure of stories and which I am about to introduce.

2. Corporeal Narratology

Although the study of narratology roots in structuralism and it still shares some of its characteristics, such as a preference for punctilious terminology and classifying, it has survived and adapted to the theoretical shifts and reconsiderations of the second half of the twentieth century. Edit Kovács contemplates whether the indisputable renaissance of narratology, or the "narrative turn" as Daniel Punday calls it (Punday 2003b, 1) marks the end of the poststructuralist era (Kovács 2010, 8), while Punday, although admitting that deconstruction and narratology make up an unusual couple, thinks that new narratological endeavours simultaneously come out of and break away from deconstruction (Punday 2003b, viii). Narratology has become an interdisciplinary study and grew several new branches such as contextual, cognitive, or corporeal narratology, and each of them is equipped with different practices and views.

Punday finds the key to post-deconstructive narrative theory in its "complex engagement with materiality" (20). His 2003 study, *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology,* as the title says, elaborates on what he named "corporeal narratology," examining the body as a narratological category and reading as an embodied act. While developing the practice of corporeal narratology, Punday heavily leans on the phenomenology of perception—especially on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, where the notions of physical movement and the sense of touching become central in terms of perception.

Merleau-Ponty, the "the patron saint of the body" (Shusterman 2005, 151) examined the relationship of the world and the body (especially the ways we perceive things with our bodies) as well as the mind and the body, refusing to follow the Cartesian notion of the primacy of the mind. As Judith Butler explains, Merleau-Ponty "interrogates the body as a site of mobility and spatiality, arguing that these fundamentally corporeal ways of relating to the world subtend and structure the intentionality of consciousness" (Butler 2005, 181). He claims "[o]ur own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 235).

The aim of corporeal narratology is to reinterpret and recontextualize the elements of narratology by focusing on bodily perceptions and experiences; to investigate the relationship of the body (the embodied subject) and the text/language, asserting that it is the body that "breathes life into" any narrative. Through analyzing (the roles of) bodies in and outside of the text (including the body of the reader as well), contrary to the usual practice of narratology investigating how a story is told, Punday attempts to examine how the interpreter creates meaning.

Punday also rethinks narratological categories applying chiefly the theories of the phenomenology of bodily perceptions and Peter Brooks' ideas of plotting. What Punday seems to overlook however, is the nature of the so-called somatized text, the "body-text" as Anna Kérchy calls it (Kérchy 2008, 29). For solely applying the phallic male gaze as a perspective, Brooks' (and later Punday's) possibilities for thematizing the body in narratology have become limited (Kérchy 2010, 74; Kérchy 2009).

The human body in a text, as Kérchy understands it, creates an ambiguous, tense atmosphere that results in tangible textual evidences. The somatization of the text "dramatizes [...] how [the semiotized body] decomposes [meaning], how it transgresses canonized representational tradition [...]" (Kérchy 2008, 28). The Kristevan semiotic modality of language and her idea of the subject-in-process and the subject-on-trial are key concepts in this project, implying that there are levels of a text over which narration loses control (Földes 2011, 39).

In my thesis I will consider DeLillo texts concentrating on the narratological categories of characterization as well as aiming to examine how the body subverts DeLillo's texts. Since, as

I observe, simultaneously with the problematizations of language, signifying, or referentiality the body habitually tends to surface in DeLillo texts, I believe a corporeal narratological consideration of his works is relevant if not necessary.

3. Corporeal Narratology in DeLillo

While DeLillo's work has already a rich academic reception, most of the literature written on his work mentions a persistent incomprehensible, "inaccessible" nature of his novels (Dewey 2006, 1), as Cowart explains "the experience of reading this author resembles a dream in which one can never quite close with a cryptic meaning that seems to hover at the edge of consciousness, constantly threatening to slip over the horizon of the sentence, the page, the volume" (Cowart 2002, 8-9).

This nature of the DeLillo texts coexists and, I assume, cooperates with the increasing inquiry into language and its possibilities and limits as subjects of fiction—throughout his works DeLillo submerges himself more and more in semiotics (4), yet he avoids implying the idea that language is nothing more than an infinite chain of signifiers referring to other signifiers as the popular deconstructionist idea claims, in fact, occasionally he seems to undermine this theory.

What I presume is that the uncanny, dreamy, "inaccessible" quality of his novels is provided by the corporeality that surfaces at points where language reaches its limits. Where the unnarratable, for instance a trauma, is about to be (re)narrated, language collapses or misfires, and materiality, with a special respect to human corporeality appears and takes over the role of signifiers. It is more characteristic and much more common in DeLillo's later novels, and I assume so far his 2001 short novel, *The Body Artist* represents the peak of this tendency.

I believe the tendency is easy to notice through the following examples. The importance of the physical body of the characters is emphasized already in DeLillo's first novel when he has the protagonist confess: "When I began to wonder who I was, I took the simple step of lathering my face and shaving. It all became so clear, so wonderful. I was blue-eyed David Bell. Obviously my life depended on this fact" (*A* 11). As Bell somewhat ironically illustrates, materiality and its role in our lives are key themes in DeLillo's novels, and character bodies are repeatedly represented as the foundation as well as the source of the characters' identity and self-expression.

Concerning the tendency in DeLillo texts that it is often the body that becomes the signifier of what has to remain untold, a simple example can be found in his 1977 novel entitled *Players*: "They waited for [Lyle] to say something. He sat, moving slowly as possible. His nose started bleeding again. This became the joke, of course. It was funnier than anything he could have said" (*P* 83). When Lyle becomes speechless his body comes into the foreground and "speaks for him," carrying on the conversation.

In *The Names* DeLillo builds on the notion of the discoursively constituted body, on language defining, determining materiality by emphasizing the power of names. A murderous cult chooses its victims by their initials, which have to match the name of the place where they stay. A former member of the cult insists that the act of killing became necessary exactly because the letters matched (*N* 209), which stresses the authority of language over the body.

On the other hand, materiality repeatedly subverts language, which admittedly leaves no place for the unspoken, the unspeakable (*N* 52). The mysterious cult is preoccupied with language and the prelinguistic, rather paradoxically: "We are working at a preverbal level, although we use words" (208), explains Andalh, a former member. The cult itself represents a mystery, an inexplicable, abject-like quality. The mere act of an attempt to verbalize what the

cult does elicits scenic physical reactions from the characters: James, the narrator vomits when he is asked about the cult (*N* 153), and later Andalh keeps coughing, hawking, and spitting while telling about them to James, who, when witnessing the spitting Andalh, is reminded of his vomiting which, as he explains then, was a result of his occupying a mental space "between ways of existing," an ambiguous experience brought to him by the philosophy of the cult. Therefore, in *The Names* language and the human body are often presented as entwined phenomena, the language suppressing the body and the body subverting language, and in the latter case the idea of abjection, in violating surfaces is commonly detectable in the images of bludgeoned or vomiting bodies.

In one of his latest works, *Falling Man* (2007), we can observe important characteristics that are similar to those of *The Body Artist*: it features a performance artist as a key figure, and it also is about working through trauma—the national psychological trauma of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. When traumatic events are to be re-narrated in *Falling Man*, the image of the body tends to enter the text in a rather aggressive way. As we are about to be retold what happened to Keith, a survivor of 9/11, right after the terrorist attack, the image of "organic shrapnels" emerges:

> [T]he survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of better term, and it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber's body. The bomber is blown to bits, literally bits and pieces, and fragments of flesh and bone come flying outward with such force and velocity that they get wedged, they get trapped in the body of anyone who's in striking range. [...] They call this organic shrapnel. (16)

This striking scene of physical violation of the skin, the physical boundary of a human being, literally by the body of another (dead) human, apparently recalls the idea of the Kristevan abject. At this point the narration of the trauma notably fails, and it is replaced with a dramatic image of injured bodies.

The novel that I plan to elaborate on will be *The Body Artist* where the body becomes a key element of the story on more than one levels. The protagonist, Lauren Hartke, a performance artist, is very conscious about her body and she develops detailed theories about language, its function, and its relationship to the body in the course of processing the trauma of losing her husband, and images recalling Kristevan theories of the abject are difficult to miss in the text. In the following sections I will summarize the plot of the novel and take a closer look at the body and its roles in *The Body Artist*, with the help of corporeal narratology.

4. The Body Artist

The Body Artist is DeLillo's twelfth novel published under his name. It is a rather enigmatic work, open to a number of various interpretations. It employs an extremely narrow scope; it focuses on one character and the story unfolds in one very limited space. The novel is of "deliberately glacial pace," and it refuses "to offer the easy pleasures of narrative" (Bonca 2002, 60).

It begins with a slow and detailed scene where a married couple, Lauren Hartke and Rey Robles, is engaged in the mundane act of having breakfast in a lonely, old, rented house on the seashore. This turns out to be the last morning they spend together since after breakfast Rey drives to his first wife's flat and shoots himself. After the tragedy Lauren plans to figure

herself out alone, but she meets an "inevitable" mysterious visitor in the house, who has several qualities of an uncanny or abject-like entity, and who accompanies her for a while before he disappears as unexpectedly as he had appeared. As a result of the time they spent together Lauren reinvents herself, becomes capable of coping with the traumatic event, and creates and performs a new piece.

The man, whom Lauren names Mr. Tuttle behind his back, might be a physically and mentally impaired person, a homeless man, a ghost, or maybe a figment of Lauren's imagination (Karnicky 2009, 7; Cowart 2002, 206), his character is extremely mysterious. The novel is definitely "a turn away from the shared world of human culture to the inner experience of one woman's thought" (Karnicky 2009, 9). Since Lauren is a performance artist she constantly invents and plays roles as part of her "profession" but she does the same thing in her private life, too, during her reoccurring daydreams. As Jon Roberts points it out, "Lauren's art has everything to do with self-abandonment [yet this process is also] evidenced in moments that have very little to do with her art" (Roberts 2006).

The Names was DeLillo's first novel to be "almost obsessively" preoccupied with language (Cowart 2002, 162) and the body, and he revisits these topics in several of his novels. *The Body Artist* eventually is wholly dedicated to these tasks. As it has been illustrated in the previous section, the DeLillo canon has a characteristic of violating boundaries in numerous aspects: the boundaries of genres; the sheer physicality of characters, and *The Body Artist* clearly violates the boundaries of the narratological categories of characterization and narration, too.

What I am proposing is that once we analyze characters' and the narrator's voices in the novel we find that we have more voices than characters bodies, in fact, according to my idea we only have one character body, that of Lauren Hartke and the character of Mr. Tuttle and even the narrative voice are imaginable as fragments of her identity. My hypothesis will be that the protagonist of *The Body Artist* occupies a metaposition, where she can be interpreted as a creator, a character, a narrator, and an interpreter. She possesses narrative as well as performative qualities, and instead of her consciously using them, they uncontrollably stem from her physicality, repeatedly summoning the phenomenon of the abject, and making her role and function in the narrative complicated.

5. Abject/ion

I believe the textual phenomena I am interested in considering the DeLillo novels, that I call the "unnaratable," the "inaccessible," has a lot to do with Julia Kristeva's theory of the transalinguistic layer of meaning. The "appearances" of the semiotic realm, the "name for the unnameable" (de Nooy 1998, 29) might be what we experience in these texts, for, as Kristeva explains, it is always entwined with the symbolic, and since we cannot approach it directly, we have access to it "through studying its effect on signification" (30).

The phenomenon, which, I believe, grants us the access to this site is that of the abject. It is one of the strongest of the forces that keep the (poststructuralist idea of the) subject in process, which Kristeva discovered and elaborated on in her 1980 book entitled *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection (Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* translated into English in 1982*)*. It signifies an absence, it comes from beyond the symbolic, associated with the eruptions of the Real into our lives (Felluga) that is simultaneously attractive and repulsive, threatens with destruction but takes part in the constitution of the subject.

In *The Body Artist* I am about to discuss the main character(s) for whom the nature of the abject is rather elemental. The main character(s) is deeply enigmatic and possesses "very few

qualities which are recognizably and conventionally human" (Bonca 2002, 60). As we will see the text of *The Body Artist* includes a number of the features of the Kristevan abject, especially the way characterization is carried out in the novel concerning the figures of Lauren and Mr. Tuttle. In the course of examining characterization in the novel I will apply Daniel Punday's terms and understanding of literary characters, which I am about to present.

6. Characterization in Corporeal Narratology

In his study entitled *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology* Daniel Punday builds a narratological practice around the phenomenon of the human body. He claims that "our very understanding of the idea of narrative depends on a particular way of conceiving the human body" (Punday 2003a, 53), for instance, according to him, the starting point of character identity is the birth of a character (28). "Narratology in this sense is a form of discourse that is deeply entwined with the modern body" (53) and it depends on "a theory of how the text can be meaningfully articulated through the body" (15).

Punday examines the ways bodies become meaningful narratological categories in a text by lending the given characters their significance (53). He draws on the observation of Mary Douglas who states that "the body must be instilled with a specific set of meanings before it can take on a role in culture," (57) since, as Punday claims, the same process takes place in narratives (ibid).

According to him, one of the central aspects of corporeal narratology is the understanding of character bodies. Minding textual bodies Punday reconsiders a traditional narratological interest by revising "the possible forms of narrative bodies" (53) since narratology has "relied on a historically limited understanding of the body as an object of analysis" (54), which resulted in interpretive difficulties regarding certain character bodies.

The model of the sorted character bodies, in which all literary characters could be sorted into clear categories, fails to account for some aspects, therefore Punday extends the limits of this understanding (73). His chief example for alternative character bodies is Toni Morrison's Beloved, who invites a corporeally more complex interpretation. Beloved's appearance is "ontologically heterogeneous—she quite literally does not inhabit the same world" (ibid) as the rest of the characters, while she is closely, physically tied to them, which makes it difficult to compare her to the other, "sorted" characters. She is not only problematic, she fulfills an extra role. In Punday's theory Beloved is a "general character," a mediating figure between the other characters in the novel as well as between the reader and the text by "representing the many ways in which we can give significance to Morrison's whole novel" (74), she is a "physical embodiment of a story" with which the reader is confronted (77), suggesting that an interaction with a text is more complex than what a schematic structure would suggest (75).

The example of Beloved shows that a character type is capable of bringing "character and character, reader and text into contact [since] she is literally the means by which these narrative elements 'touch'", therefore being located "outside of narratology" (77). Narratology, as Punday points it out, "has failed to theorize moments when character corporeality will exceed individual bodies and provide a general hermeneutic atmosphere for the reader's contact with the narrative" (ibid). To sum it up, the general body stands above sorted character bodies, mediates between them, and also provides access to the text for the reader.

Punday claims that in order to thoroughly understand "the semantics of narrative's characters" we do not only need to sort character bodies but we need to see and locate them in a broader hermeneutics. This is necessary to make the bodies meaningful and this is the process

that defines the general body. The general body might be presented in various ways (83), the point is its function of being "our readerly ingress to the story" (82-3).

I think Punday's flexible understanding of character bodies and his idea of a general character body in a text serving as a "mediator," an "ingress" into the text are highly relevant in this examination of *The Body Artist* for I believe the continually observable, "inaccessible" quality of the novel is caused by the protagonist, whom I understand as an incompetently functioning general character body.

7. Body Artist(s)

In the following sections I will examine the characterization in *The Body Artist.* The novel works with an extremely limited set of characters: after the death of Rey we mainly see Lauren, the protagonist in the empty house, being accompanied by Mr. Tuttle. The third entity in the novel that is important to mention is the narrative voice, which is unusually entangled in the thoughts and emotions of Lauren. As I will explain, I see the narrative voice as the voice of the protagonist, and Mr. Tuttle as a projection of her, which eventually leaves us with several voices but only one character body: that of Lauren.

The narrator and Mr. Tuttle repeatedly prove to have difficulties in expressing what they would like to express, while their bodies and bodily sensations can be defined as insignificant because neither of them has a solid, separate body. Tuttle's presence and activities, the narrator's speech, and at times Lauren's speech and body all contribute to the "inaccessible" nature of the text of *The Body Artist,* in which, I claim, Punday's idea of the general body functions in a disabled way.

As has been mentioned, I am reluctant to interpret Mr. Tuttle as a distinct character. Throughout the novel nobody else sees and talks with him besides Lauren, and considering his physical quality he hardly has a distinct body. Although he undoubtedly serves as a muse (Cowart 2002, 204; Dewey 2006, 131), since Lauren noticeably feeds on the incomprehensible expressions of Tuttle when creating her performance. David Cowart suggests Tuttle may be understood as the inner artist of Lauren, which gets "temporarily obtunded or disoriented by late catastrophe" (Cowart 2002, 205-6). This insight is what is closest to my understanding of Mr. Tuttle, since besides concentrating on the similarities between him and Lauren he appears to occupy a position that she longs for—thus, the body artist of the title might be him.

Tuttle and Lauren have to be interpreted as one character since as numerous studies, for instance those of David Cowart, Laura Di Prete or Joseph Dewey imply, they share one character body and one consciousness and the narrative voice also belongs to Lauren. In the next few pages I will highlight those characteristics of these three entities, for which I claim *The Body Artist* is the peak of the DeLillo oeuvre concerning his "inaccessible" writing style. These characteristics often recall the Kristevan theories of abjection, as they are unusual, incoherent, occasionally might seem to completely resist interpretation, and most of them involve physicality in one way or another. They eventually make the narratological category of "character" rather problematic even in the flexible theory of Punday, exactly because of the way bodies are presented in the novel.

7.1. The Narrative Voice (of Lauren Hartke)

Almost the whole text of *The Body Artist* is narrated in third person. There is only one exception to that, an episodic part entitled "Body Art in Extremis: Slow, Spare and Painful."

It is not an inherent part of the story, but inserted between the sixth and the seventh chapters, breaking the atmosphere of the narration. It is narrated in first person and signed at the end by Mariella Chapman, a friend of Lauren, who knows nothing about the details of Lauren's inner projects and processes, although she states that Lauren is continuously in the process of becoming someone else (*BA* 105). Lauren's thoughts and emotions that are habitually described by the narrator suddenly become untraceable in this part. Chapman's narration lets us catch a glimpse on what Lauren and her performance look like from the *outside*, given that otherwise, all through the novel we are *inside*. What I propose here is that the third person narrative of the novel is only grammatically third person, and it is in fact the voice of Lauren, therefore it works as a first person narration. In the following passages I will explain why do I define the narrative voice as that of Lauren and why do I find it more complex and significant than simply a strategy of focalization.

The text itself shows signs of being narrated by the protagonist, which is curious regarding that one of the main themes of DeLillo's novels is the issue of identity and subjectivity, and he stresses an interesting relationship between the first and the third person. He problematizes it already in his first novel, *Americana* (1971):

> "How does a successful television commercial affect the viewer?"
> "It makes him want to change the way he lives."
> "In what way?" I said.
> "It moves him from first person consciousness to third person. In this country there is a universal third person, the man we all want to be. Advertising has discovered this man. It uses him to express the possibilities open to the consumer. To consume in America is not to buy; it is to dream. Advertising is the suggestion that the dream of entering the third person singular might possibly be fulfilled." (*A* 271)

While criticizing the American culture and media, according to Benjamin Bird DeLillo is also skeptical about the homogeneous "modernist conception of the self" (Bird 2006, 185) by discussing not only the unattainable "universal third person" but also David Bell (the protagonist and first person narrator of *Americana*) as living in the third person version of himself. Bell also shrinks from the experience of the first person for it seems illusory and "vulnerable to distortion" to him (Bird 2006, 186), which refers to the distortion caused by the successful television commercial, but it might also refer to any other change the subject is to go through.

Following Bird's concern one may conclude that the altering of the subject is implied in *Americana*, and this idea was taken to a higher and more conscious level in the figure of Lauren Hartke. One of the most spectacular talents of Lauren is that she keeps changing her voice throughout the novel so successfully that the voices she produces shock people. As Chapman observes "[s]he switches to another voice. [...] spooky as a woodwind in your closet. Not taped but live. Not lip-sync'd but real. [...] I search my friend's face but don't quite see her. [...] I can almost believe she is equipped with male genitals [...]" (*BA* 109). Lauren "carrie[s] a voice in her head that [is] hers and it was dialogue or monologue [...] a voice that flow[s] from a story in the paper" (16), which also illustrates that moving between different conceptual frameworks in not uncommon for her (19). She does not do it on purpose though, as it is explained "[n]early everything she read sent her into reverie" (23). Due to her being extremely talented in producing different voices and being able to occupy different roles effortlessly (sometimes without

her noticing it) I claim Lauren is capable of mastering the narrative voice and presenting it as the voice of a third person.

The scope of the narrator of the novel is limited, uncertain about numerous things that are presented, provides no understanding or commentary on most of the characters' thoughts and motives while sets out to giving extremely detailed descriptions about Lauren's perceptions, opinions and insights in situations that might occasionally seem irrelevant: the narrative is focalized through the perspective of Lauren and only Lauren. In some cases the narrator is clearly uncertain about what happens around Lauren: trying to make sense of one of the responses of Mr. Tuttle she tells "[h]e moved his hand in a manner that seemed to mean she didn't have to say anything further. Of course he understood. But maybe not" (47). At other times it is hesitant even about Lauren herself: "[...] she felt like hitting him. No she didn't. She didn't know what she felt" (56). Occasionally, when reporting the thoughts of Lauren, the narrative voice clearly speaks for the protagonist, it omits quotation marks or any mark that would separate the thought from the narrating consciousness, for instance the statement "I am Lauren. But less and less" (117) simply blends into the narrative telling.

In a few cases the tone of the narrative voice gets ironic, self-reflexive, and playful, as if the narrator was aware of her inability to provide a proper account of what happens: it seems to have difficulties with language itself. During the breakfast scene we see that at first she does not remember the word "lever": "What it's called, the lever. She pressed down the lever [...]" (9), somewhat later she gets confused about conjugation: "The lever sprang or sprung and he got up [...]" (10). She inserts into the text these mistakes and hesitations, as if implying that precision is not a necessity since the message of the novel is impossible to express either way.

The choices of words concerning the representation of the characters may also lead one to presume that the narration is provided by Lauren herself. She often uses phrases such as "seemed," "appeared to be," or "as if" when it comes to describing anything other than her feelings and opinions. On the other hand, when the narration sets out to describe Lauren's character and her feelings and experiences we are not only presented with longer, more detailed descriptions but we witness a different vocabulary: while everyone else "seems to be doing" things, she is the only one whose experiences and activities are followed by descriptions of her opinions, she is the only one who ponders, remembers, notices, understands, knows, wants, and tells things. Everything that is narrated in the third person is measured against the opinions and perceptions of Lauren.

As I mentioned the narration becomes wordy and detailed when it discusses the experiences of the protagonist. The following piece of text tells what Lauren thinks about the smell of soya:

> The smell of the soya was somewhere between body odor, yes, in the lower extremities and some authentic podlife of the earth, deep and seeded. But that didn't describe it. [...] Nothing described it. It was pure smell. It was the thing that smell is, apart from all sources. [...] it was as though some, maybe, medieval scholastic had attempted to classify all known odors and had found something that did not fit into his system and had called it soya [...] (15-16)

The reader is provided with detailed, first hand reports on what Lauren sees and thinks, while there is no sign that Rey, who later turns out to be suffering from depression, is about to commit suicide. This implies that the reader only knows about what Lauren knows about.

To put it simply, the narrator shares the conditions and limits of Lauren's perceptions which, as far as Merleau-Ponty's theory of bodily perception is concerned implies that they have to share the same body (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 69).

As these examples show, the narrative voice belongs to Lauren: they not only share the same perceptual conditions and limits, but also the elliptic, hesitant, in-between nature. What is also important to point out is that one cannot claim that Lauren is completely, cautiously in control of the narrative voice, similarly, she is not in control of Tuttle or her "daydreaming" periods of projecting herself into the positions of others. She occupies a metaposition in the novel; she shows characteristics of character, creator, narrator, and occasionally interpreter.

7. 2. Mr. Tuttle

Mr. Tuttle, the slippery figure who appears after the death of Rey, is the most precarious, and therefore the most confusing figure in the novel. He appears to lack subjectivity as well as a separate body; therefore it is not difficult to see him as a product of Lauren's imagination, potentially a projection of her trauma.

Firstly, his physical structure is ambiguous from several aspects. He is "nothing but the sum of his corporeal functions, needs, and instincts" (Di Perte 2005, 502), while he is also described as being difficult to see (*BA* 46); easy to miss or forget quickly (95); his body undergoes impossible changes, which means he is a ghostly, intangible figure without a solid body. He does not possess any permanent physical or psychical traits, as if lacking a phenomenological shell, like someone who is stuck in a Kristevan pre-thetic dimension with uncertain boundaries (Keltner 2011, 27). As the narrator explains "[h]e had no protective surface. He was alone and unable to improvise, make himself up" (*BA* 90). This means that Mr. Tuttle has no symbolic "skin" that would protect the territory of his discrete subjectivity.

Besides his general inertia, he simply does not react when he is physically touched, which would be a cornerstone of the construction of an individual body both in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and in Punday's theory of literary characters, who become significant when they touch (Punday 2003a, 81). Although Lauren "does not explicitly problematize Mr Tuttle's physical existence, she wishes to feel him" (Keskinen 2006, 33). Eventually she touches him several times but in each of these scenes little reaction is recorded on Tuttle's part, in fact, the most intense interaction between them is when they look at each other (68) but even that is rare. DeLillo explains Tuttle's lack of subjectivity with a reference to the way his sense of sight differs from that of others. "[Lauren] didn't think his eye was able to search out and shape things. Not like normal anyway. The eye is supposed to *shape* and *process* and *paint*. It tells us the story we want to believe" (80, my emphases). Mr. Tuttle has not got his own means of perception through which his consciousness could be established and through which he could be integrated in the world (Toadvine 2007, 361, 396), therefore, similarly to the narrative voice, he is not in possession of a solid body where the conditions of independent perceptions are rooted. Tuttle often imitates or "replays" the voices of Lauren and Rey, and when this happens he seems to be equipped with the physicality of the person he mimics. Lauren observes her own gestures and tones when she watches and listens to him (*BA* 50), and when he imitates Rey his voice bears the "accent and dragged vowels, the intimate differences, the articulations produced in one vocal apparatus and not another" (60).

Mr. Tuttle also seems to be incapable of using language. He only articulates meaningful sentences when he mimics the words of others. Otherwise, what he produces is logorrhea (not unlike the speech of the Beckettian Lucky) (Di Prete 2005, 496). "In Mr. Tuttle's monologue—

in the oddly scrambled speech [...]—language collapses into a heap of obscure, impenetrable, merely juxtaposed fragments" (495).

He has no signifying position and he is unable to signify with the help of language. There is not even one meaningful, conventional dialogue between him and Lauren, there is no real communication between them. As it is explained in the novel

> [a]ll they had were unadjusted words. *She lost touch with him, lost interest sometimes*, couldn't locate rhythmic intervals or time cues or even the mutters and hums, the audible pauses that pace a remark. He didn't register facial responses to things she said and this *threw her off*. There were no grades of emphasis here and flatness there. She began to understand that their talks had no time sense and that all the *references at the unspoken level*, the things a man speaking Dutch might share with a man speaking Chinese—all this was missing here. (*BA* 65-66, my emphases)

When Tuttle attempts to express himself the results are confusing for both Lauren and the reader: his speech reflects his in-between status and expresses the very inexpressibility of what he himself embodies: the trauma, the unnarratable, the unspeakable.

However disembodied his figure might seem, its influence is substantial in the novel, and its power stems exactly from his undefinable, abject-like nature. As Kessel explains it, he becomes and remains an intruder and a guest simultaneously in Lauren's house (Kessel 2008, 189). Lauren often feels confused or disturbed by him, while she is attracted to him in an inexplicable way. At one point, when their communication fails she gets indignant, then suddenly confused: "[...] she felt like hitting him. No, she didn't. She didn't know what she felt" (*BA* 56).

As an abject-like phenomenon Mr. Tuttle signifies an absence. Besides his unstructured, meaningless speech, he himself seems to stand for a place of vacuum (Boxall 2006, 217), an "error" in the symbolic system, in the text. Lauren expresses her discomfort when trying to attribute "meaning" to Mr. Tuttle: "[h]e was always as if. He did this or that as if. She needed a reference elsewhere to get him placed" (*BA* 45). Still, she cannot find a reference, and cannot get him placed, she even fails to give him a name.

Violating boundaries is one of the chief activities of both Lauren and Mr. Tuttle. Lauren is concerned with her physical and psychic limits and Mr. Tuttle, as being devoid of clear boundaries himself, also affects those of Lauren. While Lauren (more or less) consciously trains herself, Mr. Tuttle does it rather aggressively: he penetrates, intrudes, shatters. DeLillo expresses "[h]e violates the limits of the human" (*BA* 100) both because he lacks limits and because of how he affects those of Lauren.

He confronts Lauren when they try to communicate and perhaps the most spectacular scene in the novel is the one that contains the longest monologue of Mr. Tuttle. The following is a part of the monologue he produces one morning and which has reminded Di Prete of the Beckettian Lucky's logorrhea:

> Being here has come to me. I am with the moment, I will leave the moment. Chair, table, wall, hall, all for the moment, in the moment. It has come to me. Here and near. [...] Leaving has come to me. We all, shall all, will all be left. Because I am here and where. And I will go

> or not or never. And I have seen what I will see. If I am where I will be. Because nothing comes between me. (*BA* 73-74)

This is a point where the subjectivity of Lauren is the most threatened by the presence of the abject-like Mr. Tuttle. She is on the verge of collapse; she is on the way "out of herself" (75), explains the narrator, she becomes overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of the "fractured babble" of Mr. Tuttle (Dewey 2006, 131). "Her immersion in Mr. Tuttle's words implies her abandoning structured, linear temporality to experience a full 'displacement of self'"—as Di Prete points out (Di Prete 2005, 500). One might go a bit further pointing out that Harkte does not perceive the monologue as talk. She calls it singing and chanting, which, again, can remind one of Kristeva's semiotic modality where there is rhythm and rhyme but no structure and meaning.

If one is to make some sense of what Mr. Tuttle articulates, it is obvious that, as Lauren contemplates he "lapses and seeps, somehow, into other reaches of being" (*BA* 91-2). In fact he seems to be escaping the narrative and occasionally intruding and subverting it with his presence. He is an "emissary from beyond" language, he "violates the symbiosis of time and narrative" (Cowart 2002, 204). He is a representative of a rather common feature in the DeLillo canon, a character with strange, occasionally unstructured language use that serves as a "bridge between one world and the next" (ibid); as if being vehicles for the translinguistic, inviting what is beyond language and making it a recurring element of DeLillo texts.

7.3. Lauren Hartke as General Character

While I argue that Lauren is the possessor of the sole character body in *The Body Artist*, I claim she has numerous features that would render her difficult to define and classify as a "sorted character" in Punday's model of characterization. In the novel she is "suffering from a post-traumatic stress reaction" (Keskinen 2006, 33), but she has extraordinary qualities and habits even when she is not traumatized, that render her character problematic.

As Chapman explains in her review of Lauren's performance, she is "always in the process of becoming another or exploring some root identity" (*BA* 105). The novel gives several reports about Lauren doing her exercises—stretching, practicing specific bodily movements, breathing exercises, and eventually practically reshaping her appearance by chopping and bleaching her hair and even changing the texture and color of her skin. She does this in an attempt to imitate what she sees in Mr. Tuttle's undefinable, ghostly physicality. "Lauren tries to enter into the space and the time of Mr Tuttle's body, [...] And her own body work is an attempt to return [...] to this naked body of history, to remove her own 'protective surface" (Boxall 2006, 220). "In the mirror she wanted to see someone who is classically unseen, the person you are trained to look through [...]" (*BA* 84), but paradoxically her physicality, while becoming "unseen" and unclassifiable, becomes even more emphasized and problematic in the text. In her performance she embodies three characters: a Japanese woman, a businesswoman, and a naked man with prosthetic genitals. The most extreme body she has "inhabited" so far is that of a pregnant man. "At times she makes femaleness so mysterious and strong that it encompasses both sexes and a number of nameless stages" (109). Lauren's body seems almost formed in clay, changeable, androgynous, and never quite stable, which might remind one of the Kristevan pre-oedipal stage of an infant.

She is similarly changeable and undefined psychically. What I find the most intriguing and the most confusing about her character is her habit of getting lost in reveries. She slides out of and back in her life episodically, effortlessly becoming a part of either this or that reality, oc-

casionally both simultaneously, as she does during the breakfast scene when she talks with Rey over her bowl of cereal while also having a conversation with a doctor in the newspaper. "She looked past the bowl into a space inside her head that was also here in front of her. [...] She read and drifted. She was here and there" (23). As the narrating voice explains later Lauren is "always maybeing" (92), she is unable to occupy a stable and permanent position.

Her speech, and here I also regard the narrative voice, is often fragmented and hesitating, in fact, as Mikko Keskinen observes "Mr Tuttle's parlance is not far from Lauren's. [...] [Tuttle's] ostensible polyphony gets embodied in Lauren herself. She, in other words, not only hears voices but produces them herself. [...] Lauren may not, [...] imitate Mr Tuttle [...] for she probably is the one who gives him voice in the first place" (Keskinen 2006, 35). This also means that the only solid body in the novel is that of the protagonist.

Besides being character and narrator Lauren is also a creator of the text to some extent, and at times she plays the role of the audience. Lauren fulfills otherwise incompatible roles simultaneously, and she has no complete control over either of them. As Di Prete notes, "she becomes at once the teller of a story she cannot tell and a listener to what she cannot understand" (Di Prete 2005, 490). Considering her position with Punday's theory she does not fit the category of the sorted character bodies since her physicality is too undefined and fragmented.

Since each voice and character becomes meaningful when contrasted to Lauren, I would define her as the general character of *The Body Artist*, yet the category as a hermeneutic tool does not appear to fully function here. As Punday explains, the general character may be defined by the whole of the text. Lauren's audience (be it the audience of *Body Time* or *The Body Artist*) meets difficulties when they are confronted with the repetitions and the subverted monologues of both the performance and the novel (509). The audience is left without a trustworthy "ingress" into these works. The reason for this is that Lauren chooses to articulate her story through her body, therefore applying a means of mediation that harbors such subversive qualities that—when surfacing in the text—disorient and disable the reader, and eventually the whole body of the text necessarily outruns the interpreter in certain scenes. Hence in *The Body Artist* I problematize the hermeneutic tool of the general character because its role does not seem to be completely fulfilled. The repeated recurrence of the translinguistic site through the abject-like elements, which seem to stem from *The Body Artist*'s body, cast the protagonist (and the reader) into confusions which do not get resolved.

8. The "inaccessible" DeLillo texts and the Hitchcockian flair

In this section I will elaborate on the way the textual body of *The Body Artist* works and affects the reader. As I have mentioned it earlier, critics observe a curious, incomprehensible nature of DeLillo's texts and I assume this is in close connection with the author's attempts to thematize language, especially what is beyond its limits. I believe Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of Hitchcock's "flair" will be highly relevant here.

In order to better understand the "inaccessibility" of DeLillo texts, we need to look at the way these texts affect the reader. The author is a "mystifier," a "withholder" in the sense that his texts remain distant and elusive even if simultaneously his writing can be referred to as "overwritten" or "boring." His writing technique leads the readers to feel that they do not understand what it is that they do not understand.

Considering that DeLillo is interested in the possibilities and the limits of language we can see that he continually attempts to feature in his novels that which cannot be expressed with language. He experiments with writing techniques as well as topics that circle around the task

of expressing the inexpressible and these experiments result in the fragmented, slippery, ambiguous texts. In addition I believe that there are exact locations in the texts where the reader loses contact with them, where the body of the text becomes "inaccessible." These are the scenes and images I have been highlighting in the oeuvre, and in more detail in *The Body Artist*, where language and narrative habitually seem to misfire. In these locations the text seems to crack, a gap appears which entails an un-familiarizing, alienating force that the reader confronts.

The working of these withholding, meaning-resistant scenes of DeLillo texts might remind one of the effects of the Lacanian *sinthome* Slavoj Žižek examined in Alfred Hitchcock's films. According to Žižek, in Hitchcock's works there is a "specific flair [and a] substantial density of the cinematic texture" ("Remake") persisting in his oeuvre regardless of the given narratives that is provided by specific motifs that Žižek identifies as a *sinthome*, which, in Lacanian psychoanalysis is described as "a signifier's constellation (formula) which fixes a certain core of enjoyment, like mannerisms in painting—characteristic details which persist and repeat themselves without implying a common meaning" (Žižek 1992, 126). Žižek reads several Hitchcockian motives as his *sinthome*, such as the motif of "bodies which appear out of nowhere and disappear back into the void" ("Remake").

What is relevant in this investigation is the nature of Hitchcockian motives. According to Žižek, in the form of these motives it is the Real that we sense as a "surplus" or a "material leftover" (Žižek 2008, 76). This is what intrudes the text of the film, the symbolic order, and this might be the surplus Anna Kérchy refers to in her interpretation of Carter texts (Kérchy 2008, 27). Žižek explains that "we are dealing [in these scenes] with the level of material signs which resists meaning and establishes connections which are not grounded in narrative symbolic structures: they just relate in a kind of pre-symbolic cross-resonance" ("Remake"). Žižek observes that in these films we commonly meet "[t]he Hitchcockian object which materializes some *unspecified threat*, functioning as the *hole into another abyssal dimension*" (ibid, my emphases). This "hole" itself, "the gap which serves as the passage to a different ontological order" is what Žižek sees as the point where the Real "forces itself" into the text.

One is therefore tempted to read the ambiguousness of the text of *The Body Artist* against Žižek's interpretation of Hitchcock's "flair." While I would not diagnose a *sinthome* of DeLillo, throughout his oeuvre he is increasingly interested in problematizing that "leftover" or "surplus" that the symbolic order could not envelop and, he repeatedly features character bodies and bodily functions as "substitutes" for words, as signifiers for what language could not cover. Vomiting and spitting in *The Names*, tumors in the *Falling Man*, and ghostly, intangible bodies in *The Body Artist* appear in the text at points where the unspeakable, the unnaratable is about to be revealed, making the reader sense the gaps "between ways of existing" (*N* 211), and constituting obstacles for the interpreters of the text, resulting in the above mentioned mysterious nature of these DeLillo text. As Arnold Weinstein observes in *The Names*, and, in my view commonly in any DeLillo novel concerning the problematization of language, an "unspecified, unlocalizable violence is at the core of the novel, just as it seems to be at the origin of language itself" (Weinstein 1993, 295). I see this "unlocalizable violence" as the materiality in language, the body from which it emerges, and it can be defined as violent due to its quality that resists and subverts the symbolic order, hence language.

I assume this "violence" is a key element in *The Body Artist* where character bodies, voices, and the possibilities of language and representation are problematized, continually subverting the narrative (time), in the figure of Mr. Tuttle. His intrusions into Lauren's life make his very character a place where the Real intrudes the symbolic in the form of the Kristevan abject, "an unbearable corporeal presence which is also a kind of absence" (Boxall 2006, 221), and this ab-

sence generates from the figure of Mr. Tuttle. Hence I draw a parallel between the figure of Mr. Tuttle, and the Hitchcockian materializations of the "unspecified threat, functioning as the hole into another abyssal dimension." Tuttle's being impossible to be inserted into our symbolic system, the quality that makes him the most incomprehensible is spectacularly pictured in the way he resists the notion of time as we understand it. "Mr. Tuttle occupies and represents an unbroken time, *a time that is not in process* but that forms a kind of *groundless ground*, a kind of substratum to space-time, [and this is] borne out in the texture of his body" (219, my emphases). Lauren is pushed to the brink of falling apart witnessing Mr. Tuttle's "monologues" which she interprets not as speech but as a sort of chanting or singing. "[Lauren] felt an easing in her body that drew her down out of laborious thought and into something nearly uncontrollable. She leaned into his voice, laughing. She wanted to chant with him [...] but she only laughed instead" (*BA* 74-5). I find Lauren's reaction relevant here because of the metaposition I attribute to her character—occasionally she functions as an interpreter, highlighting the gaps, cracks, and errors in the text, which are ultimately inseparable from her and her body. When talking with Tuttle they repeatedly lose contact and due to that Lauren loses her interest (65). Her laugh, the only thing she can emit when attempting to join Tuttle's chanting, is reminiscent of the vomiting and spitting that accompany speeches about the murderous cult in *The Names:* it is an involuntary bodily reaction that appears, signaling the inexpressible. In my view the gap Žižek observed in the text of Hitchcock's films is noticeable here.

Lauren keeps the narrative strongly tied to her body, mixes her perceptions and the world when understands the smell of tobacco as part of Rey's body (19), or when she "hears" the sound of tearing the wax paper along her spine (34). Yet the scenes which alienate the reader from the text are where the workings of the Kristevan abject are observable. The first time in the novel when Lauren encounters an abject phenomenon is when she finds a piece of hair in her mouth. She is disgusted and she instantly "tries to rid her system of the complicated memory of someone else's hair" (11), which is not easy, and for pages the text contains recurring fragments of the description of the feeling of having a piece of hair in her mouth (10-12). This kind of penetration of surfaces, of the symbolic skin, repeatedly returns in the novel and it usually unexpectedly enters the text, interrupting the ongoing description or dialogue.

The functioning of the hermeneutic tool that Punday named "general character" becomes impaired in *The Body Artist* exactly because of the gaps that are inserted in the text through the heterogeneous, polyphonic voices and the intangible bodies that often carry characteristics reminiscent of the Kristevan abject. As I have explained, I understand the textual body of the novel as being founded solely on Lauren's body: she produces the narrative voice, her body, from which the figure of Mr. Tuttle is born, is what generates the story, she is part creator, part interpreter, "part actress, part mime, part flesh-and-bone artwork" (Begley 2001), fulfilling otherwise incompatible roles, and infesting the whole text with her bodily sensations, and her body's materiality.

To sum it up, I attempted to investigate the inaccessibility of the DeLillo texts text, especially that of *The Body Artist*, which is difficult to comprehend not because it is ambiguous but because it contains pieces of text that generate untenable interpretations. These parts of the text attempt to envelop something which language is unable to express since it is altogether beyond language. The figure of Mr. Tuttle and occasionally even Lauren prove to be containing the quality that makes it impossible to place them in the symbolic order. This makes them, and the text, quite similar to what Žižek defined as intrusions of the Lacanian Real in the films of Hitchcock: motives where we seem to witness a "hole," an error, an "unspecified threat" to order and to us. DeLillo's writing technique here results in the holes and cracks in the narrative

and in the text itself, which, if we regard DeLillo's whole body of work results in his "mysterious," "withholding" style.

Conclusion

In my thesis I have offered an interpretation of Don DeLillo's novel, *The Body Artist*. What interested me most was its uncanny, mysterious nature at a textual level, as well as its preoccupation with language, and I held it as a hypothesis that these two features are strongly connected in the DeLillo canon. I have reached this conclusion with the help of the terms and methods of corporeal narratology, a fairly recent, post-deconstructionalist narratological practice, which was first popularized by Daniel Punday.

After outlining the reception of the DeLillo canon, I presented a short introduction of Punday's corporeal narratology and its critical reception. In the following sections I focused on examining the characterization in *The Body Artist* for this is the DeLillo novel where corporeality is the most emphasized and characterization is the most problematic.

My theory was that the uncanny, dreamy, "inaccessible" quality of his novels is provided by the materiality that surfaces at points where language seems to reach its limits. Where the unnarratable, for instance a trauma, is about to be (re)told in DeLillo texts, language collapses, and materiality, with a special respect to human corporeality takes over the role of signifiers, and for this feature *The Body Artist* contains sterling examples.

In my argumentation I attempted to define the role and the functioning of the character of the protagonist. What I have found is that through subverting narratological categories the figure of the protagonist occupies a metaposition in the novel, serving as a character, a creator, a narrator, and also as an interpreter, while the character of Mr. Tuttle should not be read as a separate one but as a part of Lauren. Her figure is extremely heterogeneous and fragmented, and this is also characteristic of the whole body of the text of the novel. The character of the protagonist has to be understood as what Punday calls a "general character," which should function is a "readerly ingress" into the story, but due to its strongly emphasized corporeality its hermeneutic function becomes impaired.

This has an observable effect on the text of the novel, which seems to include numerous "gaps" and "holes," where the reader loses contact with it. I interpreted these phenomena with the help of the theory of the Kristevan abject, which can be understood as a point where the Real intrudes the symbolic system. Slavoj Žižek understands the strange "flair" of Hitchcock's works as the result of similar phenomena in the text of the film. The way I see it there are certain, often aggressively or unexpectedly "intruding" images in DeLillo's texts, which frequently feature bodily functions, such as vomiting, spitting, and whole ghostly bodies, and they appear in the text at points where the unspeakable, the unnaratable is about to be revealed, making the reader sense the gaps "between ways of existing," and constituting obstacles for the interpreters of the text, resulting in "inaccessible" nature of DeLillo texts, that critics tend to notice.

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